

Message Text

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15

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 NSC-05 PRS-01 RSC-01 /033 W

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R 260922Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9407

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, RP

SUBJECT: POLITICAL PRISONERS: FR. EDICIO DE LA TORRE

REF: STATE 281152

1. EMBASSY WOULD PREFER DEPT NOT RPT NOT DRAW ON INFORMATION CONTAINED MANILA 14831.

2. EMBASSY CHECK WITH KNOWLEDGEABLE CHURCH CIRCLES, INCLUDING DE LA TORRE'S OWN ORDER (SOCIETY OF THE DIVINE WORD--SVC), HAS REVEALED NO RPT NO INDICATIONS THAT FR. DE LA TORRE HAS BEEN TORTURED OR MISTREATED. VISITS BY SOME FRIENDS ON CHRISTMAS EVE AND BY THE SVD PROVINCIAL (MSGR. FLORANTE CAMACHO) ON CHRISTMAS DAY APPARENTLY SUPPORT THIS FINDING. AS A MATTER OF FACT, DE LA TORRE REPORTEDLY MANAGED TO HAVE A LETTER SMUGGLED OUT FROM CAMP OLIVAS IN WHICH HE SAID HE WAS BEING TREATED ALL RIGHT. PERHAPS FOLLOWING THE VOGUE SET BY TWO OTHER PROMINENT POLITICAL PRISONERS RECENTLY, HE HAS, HOWEVER, STARTED A HUNGER STRIKE ON DECEMBER 26 IN PROTEST AGAINST GENERAL "MAL TREATMENT OF PRISONERS."

3. DE LA TORRE'S MARXIST LEANINGS HAD ALIENATED HIM FROM HIS OWN ORDER EVEN BEFORE THE ADVENT OF MARTIAL LAW, AT WHICH TIME HE WENT UNDERGROUND. EMBARRASSED BY HIS ACTIVITIES, THE CHURCH HAS UNTIL NOW TAKEN A DISINTERESTED STANCE WITH REGARD TO ITS WAYWARD PRIEST. WE HAVE LEARNED THAT THE SVD PROVIENCIAL HAS ALREADY DISCUSSED

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THE DE LA TORRE CASE WITH DEFENSE SECRETARY PONCE ENRILE,

WHO--IN LINE WITH THE PRESIDENT'S DESIRE TO KEEP CHURCH-STATE REALTIONS "HARMONIOUS"--PROMISED TO LOOK INTO THE MATTER. EMBASSY DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT THE CHURCH WILL WANT TO PUSH VERY HARD ON THIS CASE, GIVEN DE LA TORRE'S BACK-GROUND.

4. EMBASSY WOULD THROW IN FOLLOWING WITH RESPECT EVALUATION PARA 3 REFTEL. DE LA TORRE WORKED WITH FFF (FEDERATION OF FREE FARMERS) AFTER HIS ORDINATION, BUT LEFT THEM IN 1972 TO WORK WITH CHRISTIAN GROUPS (CATHOLIC AND PROTESTANT) WHO SHARED HIS MARXIST VIEWS AND WERE WILLING TO WORK WITH HARD-CORE LEFTIST ORGANIZATIONS. AS SUGGESTED ABOVE, HE HAS NOT BEEN IN GOOD WITH THE SVD FOR SOME TIME, HAVING BROKEN MOST NORMAL LINKS WITH HIS ORDER BEFORE MARTIAL LAW.

5. DEPT MAY DRAW ON PARA 2 TO ANSWER INQUIRIES RE DE LA TORRE'S HEALTH AND TREATMENT.
SULLIVAN

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